

APPENDIX IV

CASPAR BARLAEUS, *ON THE NEW ANATOMY THEATRE AT AMSTERDAM*, 1639

TEXT

Edited from Caspar Barlaeus, *Poemata. Editio IV*, Amsterdam, 1645–6, pars ii, p. 537:

In locum anatomicum recens Amstelodami exstructum

Qui vivi nocuere mali post funera prosunt,
et petit ex ipsa commoda morte salus.

4 Exuviae sine voce docent, et, mortua quamvis,
frusta vetant ista nos ratione mori.

Hic loquitur nobis docti facundia Tulpi,
dum secat artificii lurida membra manu:

8 “Auditor, te disce; et dum per singula vadis,
crede vel in minima parte latere Deum.”

COMMENTARY

(i) *structure*. The opening couplets constitute broadly-stated paradoxes which are repeatedly almost resolved in the following couplets, as the original paradoxes are restated in progressively more specific instances. Thus the first couplet refers to society in general, the second to the anatomy-theatre in general, the third to a dissection in the Amsterdam anatomy-theatre, and the fourth to what is taught during a dissection in the Amsterdam anatomy-theatre. This gradual sharpening of focus, from many men (*qui vivi*, v. 1) to the smallest part of an individual man (v. 8), is accompanied by a movement in the opposite direction: as the scope of the subject diminishes, the significance of what is found increases, from health (v. 2) through virtue (v. 4) to divinity and implied immortality (v. 8). Hence the last couplet, which as it were combines the lowest note on one scale with the highest on another, presents a starker paradox than the opening couplets. Since the movement at the beginning of the poem was towards resolution, not intensification, of the paradoxes, this result can be regarded as yet a further paradox.

(ii) *details*²⁴⁸

title: the anatomy-theatre constructed in 1639 was in a building off a street in the

²⁴⁸ Abbreviations of works by Barlaeus cited in this Appendix: *Poemata* = *Poemata. Editio IV*,

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centre of Amsterdam, known then and now as the Nes. This street runs from north to south, east of, and parallel with, 't Rokin. At a point on the east side of the Nes, between it and the Oude Zijds Voorburg Waal, was a square or broad street in which were two large buildings, the greater and the lesser meat-markets. The greater meat-market was a long, low building entirely used by meat-traders. The lesser meat-market, formerly St. Margaret's church, was a taller building of lesser length, of which only part was occupied by trading-pitches. The remainder of this building was occupied by the premises of the Amsterdam college of physicians (*collegium medicum*), and, in the attic storey, by the anatomy-theatre. The exterior of the building is illustrated by O. Dapper. The interior is known only through a rough drawing by Rembrandt in connexion with his 'Anatomy of Dr. Deyman' of 1656 (Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam), in which, as at Leiden (Pl. 8), we glimpse circles of balustraded tiers surrounding the focus, which is decorated above with paired escutcheons. This anatomy-theatre was in use from 1639 to 1690. Before 1639, anatomies took place in St. Antony's weigh-house in the north-west part of the city: there Rembrandt would have seen Dr. Tulp perform. After 1690, the anatomy-theatre returned to St. Antony's weigh-house, though to a different part of it: this theatre is today reconstructed *in situ* as the centre-piece of the Geschiedkundig Medisch-Pharmaceutisch Museum.²⁴⁹

2 petit . . . commoda: cf. *In ob. Pauwi*, vv. 27–8, words of Death on seeing vivisection, "Indolui . . . et tam barbarica commoda caede peti."

2 morte . . . salus: cf. Ovid's poem on a *locus anatomicus* (*Tristia* III. 9) v. 24 "hic mihi morte sua causa salutis erit." Another Ovidian description of dissection is in *In ob. Pauwi*, vv. 25–6: cf. *Ov. Met.* VI. 636–7.

3 exuviae: Heckscher (p. 112) translated "skins". Skins of dissected criminals were among the exhibits displayed for moral instruction in the anatomy-theatres of Leiden and Amsterdam (Heckscher p. 98). In *In dom. anat.* v. 18, Barlaeus certainly refers to them: ". . . haec raptis pellibus aula riget". This meaning of *exuviae*, as "coverings" of some kind, might be supported by Barlaeus's tendency to complement the word with a

Amsterdam, 1645–6, part ii. *In ob. Pauwi* = *In obitum Petri Pauwi anatomici*, c. 1617, printed in *Poemata* pp. 79–81, and previously, with title 'Prosopopoeja Mortis, in Petrum Pauwium . . . jam vita defunctum', in *Poemata* . . . Leiden, 1628, pp. 99–101, and in *Poematum editio nova*, Leiden, 1631, pp. 375–377. *In effig. Spigelii* = *In effigiem Adriani Spigelii*, in *Poemata* p. 528. *In mens. anat.* = *In mensam anatomicam*, in *Poemata* p. 207, repr. in Heckscher, pp. 113–114. *In dom. anat.* = *In domum anatomicam quae Amstelodami visitur*, in *Poemata* p. 249, repr. in Heckscher, pp. 114–115. *De anim. admir.* = *Oratio de animae humanae admirandis*, 1635, printed in Barlaeus's *Orationum liber*, Amsterdam, 1643, pp. 96–125.

²⁴⁹ Isaak Commelin, *Beschryving der stad Amsterdam* in Caspar Commelin (ed.), *Beschryvinge van Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, 1693, book IV, pp. 649–653; Olfert Dapper, *Historische beschryving der stad Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, 1663, pp. 450–452, engraving after p. 450 (pagination irregular). Rembrandt's drawing is reproduced by Cetto (no. 260) and others. The street name "Nes" is not given on the engraved maps of Amsterdam by Dirk Swart (1623) and Hendrik Hondius (n.d., c. 1630), but appears on a seventeenth-century map bearing the name of Nicolaes Visscher as engraver or publisher. Both Swart and Hondius indicate the meat-markets, however. For further complications see Julius Held, *Rembrandt's Aristotle and other Rembrandt studies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 76, n. 131.

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word for the inner parts of the body, such as *frusta* here; cf. *In effig. Spigelii* v. 5 “*exuviis late nostris clarescit et extis*”, and *De anim. admir.* p. 113 “[*anima*] patitur corporis exuvias concuti, organa labefactari, nec de habitu, nisi destructo corpore, cogitat”. However, *exuviae* can also refer to the remains of the whole human body, sloughed-off by the soul and therefore empty of sense (*Thesaurus linguae latinae*, s.v., col. 2133). This meaning fits the following phrase *sine voce* better, and can probably be paralleled in *In ob. Pauwi* vv. 13–14 “*exuvias miserorum, & sicca morte cadentum, / iamque semel poenam corpora passa suam*”, and in our Appendix III no. 14d, p. 73 above. On balance, the context seems to call for an ambiguous translation, in which *exuviae* are represented both as the skin which, before dissection, covered over the rest of the body, and as the body which, before death, covered over the soul. Hence “integuments”.

3 *sine voce*: the same paradox is used in *In ob. Pauwi* vv. 5–6.

4 *frusta*: cf. *De anim. admir.* p. 103 “*et cum in frusta secamur, manet illa una [anima]*”; Barlaeus, *In anatomiam . . . Spigelii* (Appendix III no. 27, p. 80 above) v. 2 “*frustaque queis misere dilaceratur Homo*”.

4 *ista nos ratione*: both Commelin and Heckscher, with an eye to the word order, interpreted *ista ratione* as qualifying *mori*, but since no *ratio moriendi* has been or will be mentioned, *ista* is left without a reference, and the translator is obliged to supply one: hence Commelin’s version “*schoon de afgestorven leeden/ons raden, dat men moet ontvlieden zulk een schand*” (Caspar Commelin, *Beschryvinge van Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, 1693, book IV, p. 654) and Heckscher’s “*warn us not to die for crimes*” (p. 112). However, *ista ratione* does make sense if it is taken to qualify *vetat*, with *ista* looking back to *quamvis mortua*: although the *frusta* are dead, and therefore (one might suppose) inarticulate, it is really by virtue of that deadness (*ista ratione*) that they serve us as a warning.

5–6 *Hic loquitur*: does Barlaeus mean only that Tulp in person speaks in the anatomy-theatre (M. Tóth-Ubbens, in *Mauritshuis*, p. 92)? or does he also, as Heckscher (p. 29) suggests, imply that Rembrandt’s portrait of Dr. Tulp “speaks” to those who see it hanging in the anatomy-theatre (if it was there)? One could argue against the latter interpretation that the poem does not describe the picture accurately, since the poem uses *nosce teipsum* in an optimistic sense (see v. 7n. below, on *et*) but the picture represents the proverb in the pessimistic sense, according to our hypothesis (see p. 43 above). However, this argument is not conclusive, and whether or not the poem describes the painting is surely less important than the equivalence of each to the other, in different art forms. Both treat the same subject – the metaphysical paradox of man, mortal yet divine – in an appropriately paradoxical style using the juxtaposition of opposites.

6 cf. the poem by “*Petrus Monauius medicus vrtislauensis*” *In Fel. Plateri opus*

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anatomicum v. 34 “dum secat artificii mortua membra manu”.²⁵⁰

7–8 Here, I suggest on the following grounds, Barlaeus is not speaking only *in propria persona*, but also paraphrasing the introduction to Nicolaes Tulp's anatomical praelections, as delivered in the Amsterdam anatomy-theatre.

(a) The structure of the poem. Each succeeding couplet provides a specific instance to support the claim made in the previous couplet. Hence, just as the fact that Tulp “speaks” in the Amsterdam anatomy-theatre (couplet 3) documents the assertion that anything is taught there at all (couplet 2), so what Tulp says (couplet 4) would document the claim that he “speaks” there at all (couplet 3).

(b) The lessons of this couplet, *cognitio sui* and *cognitio Dei*, were commonly proposed as the lessons of anatomy, especially by Laurentius, an anatomist whose works Tulp and his colleagues greatly admired. See pp. 9–12 above, and Appendix III above, pp. 71–72.

(c) According to the following argument, this couplet was already understood in the seventeenth century to depend on *loquitur* in v. 5. When the present poem was inscribed inside the next anatomy-theatre at Amsterdam (c. 1690), vv. 5–6, the verses referring to Nicolaes Tulp, were omitted, having become obsolete with his retirement in 1653. If Barlaeus had been thought to be speaking *in propria persona* in vv. 7–8, the omission of vv. 5–6 would not have made necessary any further change. But in fact the following couplet from *In mens. anat.* (vv. 7–8) was substituted for the omitted “Hic loquitur . . .” couplet:

Frons, digitus, ren, lingua, caput, cor, pulmo, cerebrum,
ossa, manus vivo dant documenta tibi.²⁵¹

Here the phrase *dant documenta tibi*, like *loquitur* in the “hic loquitur . . .” couplet, requires a following passage in which the reader is told (in this case) what the *documenta* teach. Such a passage does indeed follow *documenta dare* both in its original context:

ossa, manus vivo dant documenta tibi.

Adspicis hic coram sanum quodcunque vel aegrum est,
et mala naturae deficientis habes.

Quo vitio pars quaeque ruat, qua lege resurgat,
discis et humani fata stupenda fori.

and in another poem by Barlaeus, on Johan van Beverwijck's book on urinary calculi, which begins:

Traximus e saxis rigidae primordia vitae,
istaque nascendi semina Pyrrha dedit.

Hinc documenta damus, qua simus origine nati,
et praefractum aliquid quilibet intus habet.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Printed in Felix Platter, *De corporis humani structura et vsu*, Basle, 1583, fol. α 3^r.

²⁵¹ Caspar Commelin (ed.), *Beschryvinge van Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, 1693, pp. 652–654.

²⁵² J. Beverovicus, *De calculo renum et vesicae liber singularis*, Leiden, 1638, fol. *8^r, reprinted in *Poemata* p. 557.

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In the translation of the poem on p. 49 above, vv. 5 and 6 are reversed in order to clarify the dependence of VV. 7–8 on *loquitur* in v. 5.

7 te disce: a variant of *nosce teipsum*. Cf. Benedictus Figulus (Benedikt Töpfer?), *Pandora magnalium naturalium aurea et benedicta*, Strasbourg, 1608, fol. **3^v “Ja alle *Creata* sind Buchstaben darinnen gelesen wirdt, wer der Mensch ist, dann vor allen dingen soll ihm ein jeder das *Nosce te ipsum* trewlich lassen befohlen sein, dass er sich selbst lerne, wie *Aristoteles Chymicus* zu *Alexandro Magno* gesagt: *Disce te ipsum & habebis omnia*.” For Barlaeus’s use of variation cf. Appendix III no. 27, p. 80 above, “qui temet nescis”. He may have varied the phrase here in order to avoid the pessimistic overtones of *nosce teipsum* (cf. Appendix V below), which would have been out of place in the present optimistic context: see next note.

7 et: establishes that *nosce teipsum*, paraphrased as *te disce*, is intended here in an optimistic or neutral sense such as Laurentius’s (cf. pp. 32–33, 71–72 above), not in the pessimistic sense (cf. p. 34 above, pp. 90–102 below). The latter sense would have required *at* in place of *et*, and more explanation.